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THE STUDY OF EDUCATION BY PROSPECTIVE COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS: THE VIEWS OF SOME COLLEGE PRESIDENTS ¹

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The question put to the college presidents of New England in the circular letter sent out by the officers of the Association was: "In appointing college instructors to your staff, or in recommending them for appointment, how much weight do you give to the fact that they have, or have not, studied the history, principles, and problems of education?" Further, the letter stated, "The Association will esteem it a favor to have your general views on the feasibility of training prospective college instructors for more efficient service through such studies."

Twenty-five such letters were sent out, to which there came in response eighteen pertinent replies. All the replies show definite opinions and indicate that the New England college presidents have the work of the department of education in mind. The replies may be grouped under three headings: (1) those indicating that weight is actually given to educational study in appointing or recommending instructors; (2) those indicating an encouraging attitude on the question; and (3) those indicating an indifferent or dubious attitude toward the question. The number of replies in the first class was three, in the second, eight, and in the third, seven.

The three members of the first class were Bates, American International of Springfield, and Smith. President Chase of Bates writes, ". . . an acquaintance with the history, principles, and problems of education always enters into our list of

¹The three papers following were presented at the third annual meeting of the New England Association of College Teachers of Education. They present a discussion of the replies to circular letters of inquiry sent out by the Association to the presidents and professors in New England colleges, and to the superintendents of public schools in New England.

qualifications for teaching at Bates." President Lee of the American International College writes, ". . . a special pedagogical equipment through the study of 'the problems of education' has with us very decisive weight." President Seelye writes, "In the selection of teachers at Smith College precedence is given to those who have studied the history, principles, and problems of education." As throwing some light upon two of these replies, it is known that Bates sends a great many of its men into teaching, and that the peculiar problem in the International College is the introduction of the foreign mind to American ways of thinking.

The eight members of the second class, showing an encouraging attitude, were Boston University, Brown, Colby, Harvard, Simmons, University of Maine, Wellesley, and Williams. President Huntington writes, "although the fact remains, that the ideal teacher is 'born and not made,' yet, for the sake of the profession, I have no doubt that the grade of teaching would be appreciably improved in all our colleges if all instructors should have a thorough elementary training in pedagogics." President Faunce writes, "I regard such knowledge as very desirable just as I regard the knowledge of social and political science." He places such knowledge, however, fourth in the list of qualifications of the college instructor, it being preceded by knowledge of his subject, teaching power, and love of research. President White of Colby writes, "My own conviction is that it is a great gain for college instructors to have pursued the studies which you suggest." President Eliot observes, "I think the whole body of college instructors would be much more effective if they had followed in youth some courses on the history of education and the best methods of teaching." President Lefavour of Simmons says, "I have more than once expressed the regret that those who are looking forward to the profession of teaching do not give more attention to the preparation for the practice of that profession." President Fellows of the University of Maine writes, "I should welcome any movement which would train prospective college instructors as suggested." President Hazard of Wellesley writes, "Any teacher who desires to fit

himself for thorough work in my opinion should take courses in the history of education and if possible have some practice work in schools while continuing his pedagogical studies." President Hopkins concludes this list of valuable testimony to the service that may be rendered by the work in education with the observation, "It is in my opinion extremely desirable that those intending to make teaching a life work should have had such training, and I earnestly hope that your society may be largely influential in bringing it to pass that those receiving appointments as college instructors shall in increasing numbers have had special training." I may remark at this point that the encouragement received from these letters was fully as great as, if not greater than, the Association had had the faith to anticipate.

The seven members of the third class, indicating various attitudes of non-encouragement, were Amherst, Clark, Mt. Holyoke, Trinity, Tufts, Wesleyan, and Yale. The most significant letter in this series was from President Luther of Trinity, which, as including fully the general position of the other letters, follows in its entirety:

In appointing college instructors we have not thus far inquired into their previous work in studying the history, principles, and problems of education. We have sought, of course, for men qualified in the specialty in which they are to do their work and of some experience in college instruction.

To my mind the feasibility of teaching how to teach is still to be demonstrated. The normal schools produce a mechanically efficient teacher in most cases for primary and secondary work. Yet I question whether there is not a loss of individuality on the part of some teachers due to their normal training which goes far to counterbalance the undoubted improvement which weaker candidates gain from their professional training.

On general principles it ought to be true that the teacher can learn his business very largely in the professional school, just as the lawyer, the doctor, and the engineer do. Whether the method for carrying out a plan of this sort has yet been hit upon I am disposed to question. I look upon the experiments along this line with great interest and with confidence in good results to come.

I suppose this letter sounds rather like that of a reactionary, and, therefore, it surprises me, for I assure you that I am regarded by many of my good friends as a very radical person indeed.

The Association, desiring nothing more than the light of

truth as discovered through free inquiry, is very grateful for this set of letters.

The sum of the situation then is: (1) Practically speaking, there is comparatively little weight given to training in education by college presidents in New England in appointing or recommending college instructors; (2) Theoretically speaking, there is considerable importance attached to such training and considerable encouragement toward securing its practical recognition, and (3) There is considerable indifference and doubt about the wisdom and value of such training, at least for prospective college teachers.

Let us turn to the explanation of the situation. The encouraging attitude is due to the general reason above that such work is held to be valuable and worthy of recognition, especially worthy the recognition of a young person preparing to teach in a college. We may go behind the letter at this point to indicate that this general attitude of encouragement toward work in the history, principles, and problems of education for prospective college teachers is justified through its results in a few known cases in which such work has tended to orient the college teacher in his field, to develop his teaching power, and to acquaint him with the natures and capacities of his students. The problem of the Association at this point is to get these presidents to remember the encouragement they have given us when they have to act.

The indifferent or dubious attitudes, on the other hand, are due to a number of reasons, the first two of which are gathered from the letters, while the others we may supply. These reasons in general are: (1) College presidents emphasize other things like knowledge of a speciality, the natural ability to teach, the power of research, etc., to the practical exclusion of this thing. We of the Association do not want those things emphasized less but this thing more.

(2) They have a real doubt about its value, as it tends, they think, to handicap individuality, introduce mechanism, etc. But on the general premise of all objections, viz., "teachers are born, not made," it should be logically recognized that educa-

tional training cannot "make" an individualistic teacher formal nor a vital teacher mechanical, even if such were the aim. Whatever truth lies in the maxim that artists are born, not made, favors the advocates of educational training as much as the opponents. To the advocates the maxim means, "you cannot spoil a born teacher;" to the opponents it means, "You cannot make an unborn teacher." Both are right, but neither touches the heart of the question as to the value of professional training. Born artists still have to study technique. (3) The college presidents who represent the opposing attitude toward professional training in education do not recognize that such training can really contribute something to the development of native teaching ability and to the general efficiency of the college teacher. Their tendency is to think of instructors as men whose previous experience and present study fit them to deal instructively and interestingly with their subjects, but they do not also think of them as facing educational problems of vast significance in lecture and classrooms and in faculty meetings, for which previous professional study could to some extent prepare them. Such educational training they consider good for the lower schools but not for the college.

(4) Appointments are sometimes made on the basis of a low standard, in which one or even two of the three characteristics usually deemed essential may be lacking, viz., knowledge of the subject, teaching power, ability in research, to say nothing of professional training in educational history and principles and problems. Many, perhaps most, colleges can show cases of recent graduates being asked to teach on the basis primarily of their undergraduate brilliant successes, no further standard of any sort being required. Some of these experiments end well, others disastrously.

(5) There is little demand for professional training of college instructors because, as some of the letters indicate, there has been almost no supply to help create the demand.

And (6) college presidents who oppose such training, like certain members of their faculties, have an incorrect view of the purpose and results of educational study. They all alike make

the huge mistake of supposing that such study claims to take the place of or to minimize the value of such things as knowledge, teaching power, and research. In a private letter from one of the leading university professors of education in the country, one of the paragraphs runs as follows:

College authorities have not concerned themselves about work in education for college instructors because they have not learned the value of such work, and some of them are disinclined to learn it. Further, they persist in maintaining a false view of the scope and aims of work in education, whether for college instructors or for secondary-school teachers, all of which means that the indifferent attitude of some college authorities toward work in education is determined by ignorance.

This, then, is the situation, and these the causes for it. What are we going to do about it? In the effort to reach the minds of college presidents practically we must do at least three things. First, we must define more specifically our own faith; second, we must help get a good supply of professionally trained college teachers; and third, we must help stimulate the demand for such prepared teachers. Let us note a few things with reference to each of these points.

First, do we ourselves believe in educational training for college teachers? Personally I do, and from my own experience. My work is too comprehensive for these modern days of specialities, covering as it does psychology, logic, and metaphysics, as well as education. But poor as my teaching is, I know it is better because of my work in education, running back to my undergraduate beginnings with Professor Alderman, now president of the University of Virginia—a work that touched with light also the profession of teaching as an occupation for college-trained men. And since I have already grown personal at this point, I may as well confess that it seems to me that teachers of education ought to strive to be the best teachers in the college and so seek to demonstrate by an object-lesson the possibility of passing from this science to this art. I believe in such training, then, from personal experience. Others believe in it too for various reasons. A certain college Latin professor recently remarked to me that he wished he could take a course himself in the history of education; but at the same time he

surprised me by expressing doubt about its professional value for college students.

This is not the place to discuss the cultural and social value of the work in education for the student in general, but only its professional value for young men preparing to do college teaching. Such training acquaints them with the larger bearings of college educational problems, helps to make them love their profession as a high type of noble service to their fellows, helps them to inspire capable young men to enter it, acquaints them with college students, and their general nature, prevents some blundering and heart-aches by showing them a few things about how to teach and how to manage from the beginning. Such training, I may remark, is particularly serviceable for instructors in small teaching colleges in distinction from large university colleges and graduate schools.

I might remark too that such work in education in all its phases may naturally come to be the training-ground for future college presidents themselves. At present there is no recognized training-ground for college presidents—they are recruited from the ministry, from the professional staff, and from business. Some American college presidents who have come to their position through educational work are Alderman, Butler, Hall, the lamented McIver, and Seelye.

Second, we must help get a good supply of professionally trained college teachers. How? (1) We should advocate that every candidate for the Ph.D. degree to teach in a college should have at least one minor in education. A practical question at this point facing every college teacher of education is, how to secure recognition of the work in education by prospective college teachers themselves?

(2) We should advocate that each university department which offers work leading to the Ph.D. degree should conduct a professional seminar for its students who expect to teach that subject, or should at least give courses for teachers of that subject. This is often done in many of our larger institutions already. The system needs to be extended.

(3) Colleges with or without graduate schools should train

prospective college teachers by using them as assistants in departments. This is the actual arrangement at Dartmouth now. In this way young men come to learn the routine of the work in any case. It is important to provide some practice teaching in connection with such assistantships.

(4) We should advocate giving a Master's degree to teachers in service holding the Bachelor's degree who work in a series of sessions of a summer school. The summer schools always offer educational courses, they are largely attended by teachers, and to some extent the professional atmosphere pervades them. The teachers who attend them know what they need and regularly profit by such attendance and summer study. In line with the same idea, encouragement should be given to the work for the non-resident Master's degree. Such candidates often drop out, but, where they do go through, it usually means professional advancement. From the mediaeval scholastics until now the Master's degree and teaching have been more or less closely associated.

And (5), well-equipped university departments of education might well plan to meet directly the needs of prospective college teachers. In a general way this could be done by stressing the history of the college and university movement, and by indicating the profound social and general philosophy of education, and in a special way by one course on "The Problems, Aims, and Methods of College Education," or some such thing. The experiment is yet to be made in the history of education, of definite professional training in education for young candidates for college teaching positions. When it is adequately tried, the application of knowledge to a special practical problem will prove profitable here also. All these ways—and perhaps still better ones could be thought of—tend to get a supply of professionally trained college teachers, which itself will tend to create the demand for such.

Third, we must do what we can to stimulate the demand. This can be done by giving in legitimate ways the widest publicity to our work, both in and out of faculty meetings. Misconceptions abound; they need to be cleared up. Solid informa-

tion should be pressed home. Here let me quote another paragraph from the letter previously mentioned, as follows:

The most comprehensive answer I can make is that whenever an opportunity arises for giving information to college authorities on the subject of instruction in education for college instructors or for other teachers, we make the most of that opportunity. Whenever there is a collision, for example, between a professor in charge of the work in education and other members of the faculty, that is the opportunity of the professor of education. He is then justified in giving information freely, exhaustively, and energetically, and the others must listen because they have brought the deluge on themselves.

At this point I may remark, by way of object-lesson again, that the teacher of education ought to show himself, without forwardness, a particularly willing, reliable, efficient, and useful member of his faculty.

And finally, where convenient and possible, a friendly conference on this subject between the chairman of the department of education and his own college president will prove mutually beneficial and also helpful toward the practical recognition of work in education. Special arguments based on the local and particular needs of each institution avail most. For such a conference the letter of inquiry has itself paved the way. When it comes to securing practical recognition of the work of education from college presidents, each one of us must begin by cultivating his own garden.